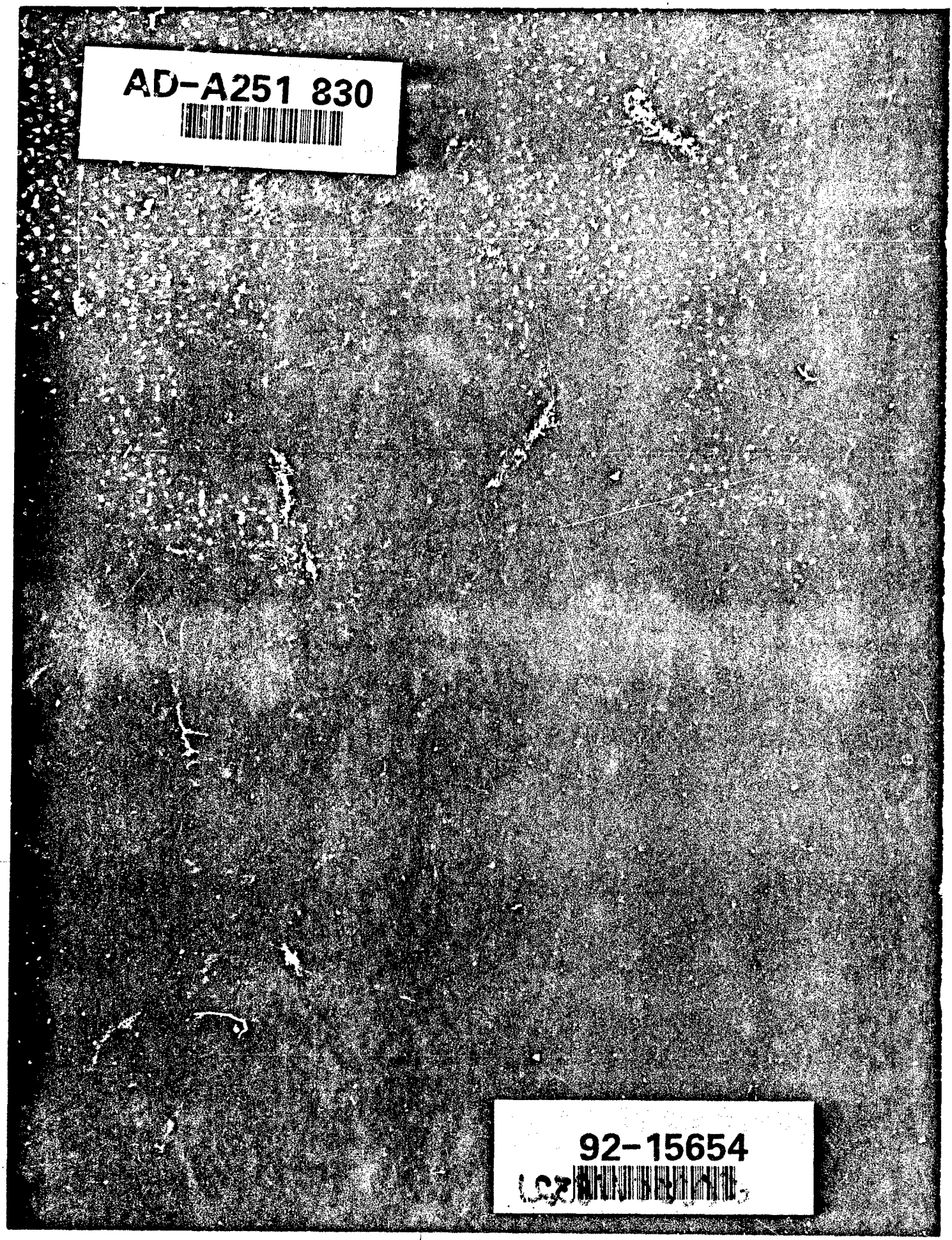

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Coalition warfare is an important area of military study for today. During the War of the Spanish Succession, the Duke of Marlborough successfully led a coalition of over twenty nations and states against the armies of Louis XIV of France. During the war, he waged ten campaigns applying military brilliance to defeat French military preeminence on the continent. His victories propelled England to a position of power in Europe. He achieved his many successes despite being crippled by the myriad problems incumbent in coalition warfare. It examines how the Duke of Marlborough dealt with the challenges presented by his coalition partners. It concludes with potential lessons for those who might wage coalition warfare today.

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COALITION WARFARE UNDER THE DUKE OF MARLBOROUGH DURING THE WAR OF THE SPANISH SUCCESSION

AN INDIVIDUAL STUDY PROJECT

by

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ABSTRACT

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Coalition warfare is an important area of military study for today. During the War of the Spanish Succession, the Duke of Marlborough successfully led a coalition of over twenty nations and states against the armies of Louis XIV of France. During the war, he waged ten campaigns applying military brilliance to defeat French military preeminence on the continent. His victories propelled England to a position of power in Europe.. He achieved his many successes despite being crippled by the myriad problems incumbent in coalition warfare. This study examines Marlborough's prosecution of the War of the Spanish Succession, focusing on the aspects of coalition warfare. It examines how the Duke of Marlborough dealt with the challenges presented by his coalition partners. It concludes with potential lessons for those who might wage coalition warfare today.

INTRODUCTION

In the annals of human conflict are found numerous examples of wars fought by groups of nations bonded together to defeat a common foe. These expedient, often fleeting alliances are called coalitions.

Coalition warfare is best defined as war in which the interests of several allied powers merge into a common goal of defeating a hostile power or alliance. Often, the alliances are expedients, where each ally also has his own set of national objectives. The common bond is the defeat of the adversaries, a prerequisite to achieving individual national goals. Many times, these coalitions are fragile, and the allies might, under different circumstances, be adversaries. At best, coalition warfare is a delicately balanced arrangement where military requirements and political realities often conflict. Whatever the political situation, coalition warfare presents the commander of its forces with unique challenges.

Coalition warfare is an area that is significant in military studies. The United States has won three wars in the 20th century (World War I, World War II, and the Persian Gulf War) by waging successful coalition warfare. Considerable literature exists on military doctrine and military history, but little on coalition warfare. Since coalition warfare is likely in the future, particularly when considering the emerging national military strategy of the United States, it is certainly an appropriate area for further study.

Military history provides a good medium to study many aspects of the profession of arms and it teems with examples of

coalition warfare. Considering these factors, the purpose of this paper is to look at coalition war as it was waged in the past for possible lessons that one can apply today for future alliances. To keep this study in manageable proportions, the War of the Spanish Succession (1701-1713) was chosen. There are two reasons for selecting this war. First, it provides a quintessential look at coalition warfare as twenty confederate states bonded together into the Second Grand Alliance to defeat the army of Louis XIV of France. It was fought in an era of constantly changing alliances, where allies often had quite different objectives. Further, it was a period rich with political intrigue, both nationally and internationally, all serving to undermine the war effort.

Second, it was an era of one of the great captains of military history, John Churchill, the First Duke of Marlborough. In 1702, he assumed command of the coalition army of the Second Grand Alliance against France. He led his army through 10 successful campaigns and fought four of the great battles of modern history with his coalition forces. Through strategic, operational and tactical brilliance, he broke the power of France as the preeminent nation on the continent, and placed England at the summit of European power. Military professionals have studied the military genius displayed by Marlborough during the War of the Spanish succession. What is not often studied about this great leader are the challenges he faced in leading the coalition army of the Second Grand Alliance.

BACKGROUND

John Churchill was born in 1650, the third child of civil servant, Winston Churchill, and Elizabeth Drake. Little accounting remains of his early years. However his penchant for the martial is clear in what is available. His rector at St. Paul's school noted in 1664 that he learned the elements of the art of war from Vegetius' De Re Militari.[1] He made a name for himself early as he moved into the inner circle of England's royalty under King Charles II. During these early years, he developed a close, personal relationship with Princess Anne, the daughter of King James II and the future queen. He married her best friend and closest confident, Sarah Jennings.

At age 18, he sought service with the admiralty in the war against the Moors at Tangiers. In 1672, he served again with the navy at Sole Bay. In 1674, he received a colonelcy from Louis XIV and commanded an English regiment in the service of the French! He served under the great French general, Turenne, at the battles of Sinzheim and Enzheim, earning distinction at every turn.

In 1685, he continued his distinguished service as head of the Household Cavalry in putting down the Monmouth Rebellion in England. By the time of the Glorious Revolution in 1688, he had attained the rank of brigadier. At the conclusion of the revolution, William III made him the commander in chief of the reconstituted English army and appointed him the Earl of Marlborough. He served with distinction under the Dutch general, Waldeck, in 1689 as part of the League of Augsburg, an earlier coalition against France. Political intrigue and conflicting loyalties led to a blot on his illustrious career

in 1694. He was accused of plotting with the deposed James II against King William. Because of these charges, he was removed from command, and imprisoned in the tower of London. The charges were never substantiated, and he eventually returned to the good graces of the king and was restored to his post.

Throughout his early years, Marlborough had ample opportunities to develop the skills necessary to work in a coalition environment. His military experiences on the continent were usually as part of a coalition. When in the service of the French from 1672-1674, his military contemporaries included Prince Eugene, later to be his staunchest military ally, and Counts Boufflers and Villars, both of whom would be his opposite commanders during the War of the Spanish Succession. Between 1675 and 1678, he served as a representative of the court of England, where he gained repute for his diplomatic work. By 1678, he was acting with King James' authority in coordinating with the Dutch and Spanish alliance against France. His duties included diplomatic arrangements as well as the strength of forces and the military details for cooperation.

His lessons in coalition warfare and diplomacy served him well as he ascended in rank. As an example, during the battle of Cork in September 1690, Marlborough faced a diplomatic conflict with the Duke of Wuerttemburg over command of the forces opposing the Jacobite rebellion. Using his full diplomatic skills, Marlborough proposed that the rival generals should exercise command on alternate days, an unpleasant but acceptable expedient. To cement acceptance, he proposed that the password for the troops on the first day be "Wuerttemburg."[2] This gallant gesture satisfied bruised

feelings and ensured the success of the battle. This is but one example of the acute skills Marlborough acquired, skills that would serve him well as leader of the Second Grand Alliance.

In short, Marlborough spent 28 years of his public life learning and honing the craft of military leadership and the skills of diplomacy. His travels brought him in contact with those who would be his allies and his adversaries during the War of the Spanish Succession. These talents would serve him well, first in forming the Second Grand Alliance, and then in leading its soldiers in battle. On the eve of the war, Marlborough quickly became the natural choice of King William and of the allies to lead the coalition army.

The Second Grand Alliance was formed in 1702 to wage a war that Europe did not want. The Second Partition Treaty of 1699 had partitioned the Spanish kingdom between the two legitimate claimants, Louis XIV's grandson, Philip of Anjou, and Archduke Charles, son of Emperor Leopold I of the Austrian Empire, upon the death of Charles II of Spain. However, at the last minute Charles startled the world, particularly the British, the Dutch, and the Austrian leadership, and changed his will, leaving the Spanish throne to Philip, the grandson of Louis. This arrangement was totally unacceptable to the Austrian Empire, the Dutch, and the British. The resultant union of the French and Spanish thrones would give France continental dominance and seriously jeopardize the interests of the other nations.

When Charles died in 1700, Louis had a choice. He could honor the Partition Treaty, divide the Spanish holdings and keep the peace. The alternative was to honor the will and install his grandson. He

chose the latter. The result was not unexpected. The allies protested loudly and initiated preparations to contest the claim. In a preemptive strike, Louis occupied the fortresses of the Spanish Netherlands, threatening Dutch security.

King William III appointed Marlborough commander-in-chief of the English forces and appointed him Ambassador Extraordinary to the United Provinces. Unable to deter the French, Marlborough's first task was to forge an offensive and a defensive alliance among the three great powers; England, the United Provinces (Holland), and the Austrian Empire. He also drew in Prussia, Denmark, and several of the German states. He negotiated the quota of troops, the military precedence of officers, and the myriad details of putting together a coalition. Finally, he organized, trained, and commanded the British army assembling in Holland.

Having developed the background for the War of the Spanish Succession, it is now important to focus on the primary purpose for this study, an analysis of coalition warfare waged by Marlborough during his tenure as Captain-General of the allied army from 1702 to 1711. To do this, it is convenient to look at coalition warfare at the three levels of war: tactical, operational, and strategic. The study will review some of the coalition's tactical successes from the four great battles (Blenheim 1704, Ramillies 1706, Oudenarde 1708, and Malplaquet 1709) that Marlborough fought during the ten years he led the coalition army. To analyze the operational challenges, the study will examine the ten campaigns that Marlborough planned, organized, and conducted. Finally, the paper will look at the strategic coalition environment, both national and international, that

overarched the war and analyze its impact on Marlborough's plans. Because of the nature of warfare in that era, particularly the blurred boundaries between the tactical, the operational, and the strategic levels, there will be some inevitable overlap between the areas.

COALITION WARFARE AT THE TACTICAL LEVEL

To adequately look at tactical coalition warfare, one needs to explore how battles were fought, how commanders commanded, and the essence of the soldier himself.

The allied soldier during the War of the Spanish Succession was not the military professional that serves in many armies today. Soldiers in that period can be classified in four basic categories. First, some were recruited from the dregs of society or were impressed from debtor prisons, and given no choice about whether to join. Factors such as patriotism, national pride, and political or religious ideology were irrelevant. A second category of soldiers included the hirelings or mercenaries. In Marlborough's armies these were usually Danes, Prussians, Hessians, and Hanoverians, authorized and paid for by the British government and specifically hired for a set period. The third category of soldiers included members of units that were provided by allied armies, and partially paid for by the British. These forces were negotiated for as part of the planning for the upcoming campaign. The last category of soldiers was the refugees and enemy deserters. These fighters were rather transient on the battlefield and made only sporadic contributions. The above description applies equally to the armies of all the alliance nations.[3] Hence, we see

armies that were not bonded in the classical sense. These were soldiers who were willing to fight for whoever paid them and provided for their needs. Even the so called "regulars" were delighted to not be in jail, or worse.

Within the British and the Dutch armies there were elements that displayed nationalist tendencies. For some of the British, fighting was a "combination of instinctive reaction and training, to praise God, honour the Queen, stand by the colors, and chase the Frenchies."[4] Thus, the coalition soldiers did not present any unique or dividing problems to leaders on the battlefield. They faithfully executed what they were trained and ordered to do.

On the battlefield of his day, Marlborough faced a different command and control challenge than presented on today's battlefield. The formations, though massive, were confined to a relatively small piece of terrain. Limited weapons ranges, the need to mass infantry fires to achieve decisive action, and the requirements to maintain positive command and control kept soldiers virtually shoulder to shoulder. All of his famous battles were fought on frontages that were extremely narrow by today's standards. For example, at Blenheim, he deployed 56,000 allied soldiers on a 4 mile front. At Malplaquet, he employed over 100,000 allied troops on a 4 mile front. The frontages at Ramillies and Oudenarde were 3 miles or less.

Marlborough usually stationed himself at a vantage point from which he observed the entire battle. He frequently moved across the entire battlefield to critical points to attend to tactical details. At Blenheim, Ramillies, and Malplaquet, he stationed himself at the point of the critical attacks. He transmitted orders through a group of

competent, well- schooled aides who rode directly to subordinate commanders with Marlborough's instructions. These subordinate commands were led by his most trusted subordinates from any of the several alliance nations. At Blenheim, for instance, the renowned General Leopold I of Anhalt-Dessau led the entire Prussian contingent under Prince Eugene.[5] Lord Cutts of England led a composite brigade of 20 allied battalions in the critical attack on Blenheim village.[6] At Oudenarde, the Dutch General Overkirk, led the main attack with a force composed primarily of Dutch. At Malplaquet, Marlborough had multiple subordinate commanders leading their national forces. Additionally, most officers were at least bilingual. Hence, transmitting battlefield instructions was not inhibited to any significant degree by national differences or language barriers.

The tactics and the weapons for the day were remarkably similar within the allied army. All soldiers carried the flintlock or matchlock musket. The basic infantry formation was the tight rectangular formation of battalion and regimental size. The regimental commander controlled these compact formations, easing execution of basic tactics. By 1700, the British and the Dutch had adopted improved tactical firing techniques, which were quite similar.[7] Hence, national troops and hired formations were trained the same way. The Imperial troops had not adopted the same tactics, but this did not seem to cause any major problems.

Marlborough demanded well-drilled formations and his units were schooled in basic drill, regardless of nationality. The professional armies spent as much as six months of the year on the

parade ground, learning and practicing maneuvers.[8] The line formations that Marlborough employed demanded excellent drill and strict discipline. Marlborough laid great store in fire drill and individual marksmanship and made his troops practice strenuously while in winter quarters. Thus, we find soldiers of different nations using the same basic tactics and receiving similar training, greatly lessening interoperability problems.

Marlborough's demonstrated care for the well being of his coalition troops greatly enhanced his ability to lead them He consistently demonstrated an "uncanny ability to inspire trust and confidence among his men of many nations."[9] He was careful with their lives. The aftermath of the battle of Blenheim gives us a good example of his concern. One of his first priorities was to bring medical help forward to care for the wounded, both allied and French. While not charismatic, he nonetheless was effective. As one author states, "the flame of his spirit served for light, not warmth." [10] While these traits are recognized today as "good leadership," that was certainly not the case in 1700 Europe. It is little wonder that soldiers who came from the dregs of society responded most favorably to Marlborough's leadership style. His exhibited concern did much to break down any barriers that might be a part of coalition warfare at the tactical level.

In summary, coalition warfare at the tactical level succeeded under Marlborough. Part of the reason lies in the personal traits and leadership qualities of the Duke. Part of the reason comes from the multinational aspects of fighting forces during the War of the Spanish Succession. Part of the reason lies in Marlborough's insistence upon

well-drilled formations, coupled with competent subordinate leaders. All the above factors contributed to the continuous tactical successes that the coalition forces enjoyed.

Capt. Frederick Maycock, in assessing Marlborough's coalition army, wrote:

> "Surely it is one of his greatest triumphs that he welded this cosmopolitan army into one harmonious force, actuated by an intense spirit of *esprit de corps*, and bound together by their great personal affection for their leader"[11]

COALITION WARFARE AT THE OPERATIONAL LEVEL

Having considered coalition warfare at the tactical level, the discussion now turns to the operational level of war. While Marlborough experienced frequent tactical success, at the operational level the problems of coalition warfare manifested themselves greatly. Marlborough faced constant challenges in coalescing the coalition to his campaign plans. He was not always successful. As a result, the allies lost many opportunities to bring the French to the peace table.

During the War of the Spanish Succession, Marlborough planned and organized a total of ten campaigns. As the commander-in-chief of the allied armies, he planned aggressive campaigns, designed to attack France's center of gravity—its highly professional, well-trained army. In this age when many wars but few battles were fought, Marlborough proved an anomaly. His traits in this regard

were typical of later great leaders, but in this era it was anathema. Not since the days of Gustavus Adolphus had Europe seen a leader so hungry for the fight. In this "Age of Reason," generals fought using maneuver warfare, with a "strategy of evasion." Human resources were too valuable to be wasted needlessly on the battlefield. A successful general maneuvered his enemy out of position to his own advantage. Most fighting involved siege warfare.

This total reluctance to fight was the crux of the problem with which Marlborough dealt. His biggest challenge in executing plans was obtaining the cooperation of the Dutch. Under the arrangement of the coalition, deputies chartered by the States-General of the United Provinces accompanied Marlborough on all campaigns. They held the right of veto over his plans and, in the interests of the coalition, he was bound to abide by their judgment. Time and again this proved to be the undoing of well-conceived operations.

From the beginning the allies clashed over how to employ military force. Marlborough wanted to take the war into France, but the Dutch refused to go on the offensive. They were concerned with recapturing fortresses in order to better secure their borders. Marlborough acquiesced to their reluctance, and the campaigns of 1702 and 1703 were classic maneuver exercises where, by threatening invasion along unsecured routes, Marlborough enticed the French commander to move his forces to less threatening positions. The allies were able to secure many of the fortresses taken by the French in 1702. As a result the campaigns were highly successful by the standards of the day, but in Marlborough's eyes, opportunities to destroy the French army were lost. On three

separate occasions during the campaign of 1702, Marlborough had successfully maneuvered his army into position to ambush the French. On two occasions the Dutch deputies refused to attack. On the third occasion, the Dutch commander, Opdam, of the Allied right wing refused to launch an attack as both armies faced off in battle formation.[12] The French commander was likewise palsied and the armies wound up marching away from each other. This inauspicious start to the war clearly exhibits the problems with coalition warfare that were to haunt Marlborough for eight more years.

In 1704, Marlborough deviously circumvented the protocols to accomplish the campaign objectives. Bavarian forces under Max Emmanuel and friendly to the French coalition sat astride the route to Vienna, threatening an invasion into the Empire that would have undoubtedly driven the Austrians out of the Second Grand Alliance. Marlborough knew that any campaign to move allied forces from the main theater in Flanders would be strongly overruled by the Dutch. Therefore, Marlborough and Prince Eugene secretly collaborated on a plan to move main elements of the allied army to Bavaria to relieve the threat and possibly drive Bavaria from the French camp. To get the Dutch to not thwart his plan, he devised a campaign down the Moselle River against the French. This was a plan he never intended to execute. The Dutch reluctantly agreed. He left the Dutch in Flanders and moved with the British forces. By the time he marched to the Moselle and beyond, it was too late for the Dutch to protest and too late for the French to block him.

Unencumbered by the Dutch, he successfully laid waste to Bavaria and prevented an invasion of Austria, thereby preserving

the alliance. He successfully linked up with his counterpart from the Imperial army, Eugene, and was able to bring the combined French and Bavarian army to battle at Blenheim. His smashing victory there catapulted him to fame, saved the alliance, and vividly highlighted the vulnerability of the French army. However, it was a victory gained by Marlborough and Eugene deceiving, not coopting the Dutch allies. During the campaign, Marlborough had deceived another important ally, the Margrave of Baden, enticing him to besiege Ingolstadt. This action purposely excluded him from the critical battle. This "slight" would cost the alliance in the campaig of 1705.

The victory at Blenheim earned Marlborough acclaim throughout the coalition. He became a legend in his own time. However, this notoriety did little to gain support for his 1705 campaign plan. He felt that the smashing victory of Blenheim made France vulnerable to invasion by the Grand Alliance. Victory was in his grasp. His plan for 1705 envisioned a double thrust into France, with Marlborough leading coalition forces up the Moselle, while the Margrave of Baden attacked from Landau, through the Lorraine region. Unfortunately, the victory of 1704 had bred only complacency among many of the allies. Domestic problems soon dominated their agendas.

The 1705 campaign suffered from the onset. The Dutch refused to unify command of all their forces under Marlborough. The Prussian and Palatinate forces, employed by the British, arrive too late to implement the plan. The Margrave of Baden, still stinging from being excluded at Blenheim, was suddenly "unable" to supply the forces for the strike from Landau. The Dutch logistician defected

to the French, leaving support plans in disarray. Finally, when the French army occupied the fortress of Huy, the Dutch forced the allied army to return to Flanders to protect the border region. In summary, the campaign plan was scuttled before it began. Marlborough became so infuriated that he sent a letter to his opposing commander, Villars, apologizing for not attacking him.[13]

The problems of 1705 did not end here. Marlborough regrouped and devised a plan to bring the French to battle in Flanders. After recapturing the fortress of Huy, he planned a penetration of the French defense, the Lines of Brabant. He successfully maneuvered his coalition army through the lines and forced Villars to come to the rescue. Along the Dyle River, the opportunity presented itself for Marlborough to bring Villars to battle. Again the Dutch deputies vetoed operations and Marlborough was forced to call off the plan.

This did not end the frustrations of coalition war for 1705. The alliance began yet another advance to threaten French forts. Through skillful maneuvering, Marlborough brought the Allied army face to face with the French army south of Brussels, near a small town called Waterloo. Marlborough made final preparations, to include getting the concurrence of the Dutch commander, Overkirk. He set the plan in motion. Then, coalition problems set in. The Dutch deputy, Slangenberg, delayed deployment of allied troops for over an hour when he halted them so that his personal baggage train could pass.[14] He incited the subordinate Dutch generals to insist on more reconnaissance. All these actions so frustrated Marlborough that he abandoned the operation. Coalition problems cost him yet another

opportunity. Slangenberg was ultimately removed for his untimely blunders, but this did nothing to recoup the lost opportunity. The problems of coalition warfare ensured that the war would go on for another year.

As was the pattern in this war, a year of success followed a disastrous campaign. Marlborough pulled out all the diplomatic stops to gain alliance support for 1706. Initially, he hoped to take his army to Italy, where Prince Eugene's Imperial army was in peril from the previous year. The Dutch would support him only if he took no Dutch troops. However, they acceded to him total control of Dutch forces if he would use them in Flanders. With his grand plans for taking the war into Italy thwarted, he anticipated another less than eventful campaign in the Netherlands.

In the field, the campaign of 1706 was undoubtedly the high water mark for Marlborough and the alliance in terms of waging coalition warfare. A Dutch fear that an unfavorable peace was pending, coupled with a French willingness to give battle, were the ingredients that forebode successful operations for Marlborough. In May, he ultimately faced the army of Villeroy at Ramillies, the sight of Marlborough's second great battlefield success.

The battle itself was an outstanding example of coalition cooperation in that era. The British commander, Lord Orkney, and the Dutch commander, Overkirk, led their deployed formations superbly. As the battle unfolded, Marlborough read the greatest chance for winning in the Dutch sector. He unhesitatingly detached cavalry forces from his own British contingent and moved them to the Dutch sector of the battlefield. At the critical moment, these forces, under

the Dutch commander, penetrated the French lines and carried the battle. It is ironic that the French commander fully expected the main thrust to come from the British forces on the allied right. What he didn't anticipate was that Marlborough would base his plans and decisions on the situation, not on the nationalities of the participants. The British contingent on the right was critical as the exploitation force; however the heroes of the day were the Dutch and the supporting Danish horse. In a further bit of irony, exemplifying his diplomatic finesse, Marlborough invited the Dutch field deputy, Colonel Goslinga, one of his strongest critics at the time, to share his cloak on the ground that night.[15]

The campaign of 1706 continued well for the alliance as Marlborough cleared several critical fortresses of French troops. The coalition successes can be attributed to many factors. However, the common overarching principle was the spirit of alliance cooperation that Marlborough received. After the initial rejection of his plan to move to Italy, Marlborough enjoyed support from the Dutch like he had never before received. Unfortunately, he would never see such cooperation again.

The campaign of 1707 found renewed recalcitrance for Marlborough's plans. This time, however, it was the Empire along with the Dutch who vetoed his campaign plan. Marlborough saw the opportunity to drive France out of the war by a double thrust. Marlborough would lead the allied advance from the north; Eugene would invade from the south. This time his compatriot, Prince Eugene, disagreed as the Empire desired to take the war to Naples. Marlborough attempted to leverage the Austrians, but their

recalcitrance scuttled any hope of implementing his plan. Ultimately, the Empire made a local peace with the French, effectively closing the Italian theater. Unfortunately, this treaty had the effect of freeing numerous French soldiers for service in other theaters. Marlborough's hopes were further dashed when the Dutch government instructed the field-deputies not to allow a battle that year.

Overall, 1707 was a wasted campaign season. The Dutch effectively tied up Marlborough in Flanders with their orders to the deputies to avoid battle. His nemesis from the past, Colonel Goslinga, accused Marlborough of intransigence in the face of the French army for not undertaking an operation that Marlborough considered too dangerous. His rabble-rousing with the Dutch generals disrupted Marlborough's intended maneuvers. After much prodding by Marlborough, the Dutch finally let him move against the flank of the French army under Vendomme. However, it was too late to reap any real benefits.

1708 proved a successful year for the alliance, though coalition problems were again a major factor. The first half of the campaign season saw the coalition in close agreement; the second half witnessed a return of disagreements.

For the opening phase of the campaign, Marlborough divided his forces into three armies; one under his command in Flanders, a second under Eugene along the Moselle, and a third under George, the Elector of Hanover, along the Upper Rhine. His plan was to lure the French into battle in Flanders, then to move Eugene to join him before the actual fighting started. The French moved first and seized

the initiative when Eugene was delayed in linking up due to problems in Austria. However, internal problems beset the French as their two commanders, Vendomme and the Duke of Burgundy, disagreed continuously over a variety of issues.

Events brought the two great armies together at the site of Marlborough's third great battle, Oudenarde. In a battle more typical of a modern day meeting engagement, Marlborough and his coalition army bested the French. Forces from both sides were introduced piecemeal into the battle as they forced marched onto the field. The spirit of allied cooperation was probably never stronger than on the field. British troops started the battle, but were quickly joined by Hanoverians and Hessians. Dutch troops reinforced the British at key junctures and were instrumental in reinforcing a threatened right flank. Eugene commanded the British troops on the right flank. The main stoke of the fight was struck by the Dutch general Overkirk, reinforced by Danish cavalry. In a battle where the outcome was long in doubt, and where the fortunes of the opposing armies ebbed and flowed with the decisions of the commanders, Marlborough received full cooperation from his allies. The result was a victory that reflected Marlborough's tactical genius as well as coalition warfare at its finest.

As previously mentioned, coalition disagreement haunted the remainder of the campaign. Buoyed by the victory at Oudenarde, Marlborough wanted to invade France by a cross channel attack to Abbeville in the rear of the French army. Despite encouragement from the British cabinet, neither the Dutch nor Eugene would support this risky venture. Marlborough's respect for Eugene made it

impossible for him to force the issue. Another opportunity was waived in deference to alliance harmony. Consequently, the allies settled on a siege of the French fortress of Lille. This particular operation demonstrated another cooperative effort among the allied commanders as Eugene conducted the siege while Marlborough screened his efforts from French interference.

The season ended as a success for the Grand Alliance at the operational and strategic levels. The French army lay in ruin. Victory was there for the allies to claim. However, unreasonable peace demands, which will be discussed later, deprived Marlborough of the victory that the coalition army had won in the field.

Dismal progress in peace negotiations promised another campaign in 1709. Allied forces flocked to the alliance to participate in the final defeat of France. Unfortunately, the humiliating terms offered the French for peace only galvanized the nation and rallied the people to the cause.

Campaign planning for 1709 required Marlborough to again acquiesce in coalition desires. While he wanted to attack into France from the west, both Eugene and the Dutch favored a campaign in the east toward Tournai. The western campaign presented the greater threat to the French and provided a greater opportunity for success. However, given the modest British contribution to the war, Marlborough deferred to his allies.[16]

Marlborough's ultimate plan for the forthcoming campaign was to keep the pressure on the French by piercing its latest barriers. Again, allied cooperation in the field far exceeded cooperation in the palaces. Operations were well supported, no doubt bolstered by the

false expectations of impending victory. As part of the opening volley, Marlborough and Eugene laid down an effective siege on the fortress of Tournai. Once the fortress was captured, they marched on Mons. This threat forced the French commander, Villars, to give battle in the vicinity of the village of Malplaquet. This was to be the scene of the last great battlefield victory for Marlborough and his coalition army.

All the allied commanders, to include the normally recalcitrant Colonel Goslinga, encouraged battle. In the face of the French trenches, Marlborough deployed his coalition forces. The Dutch on the left and the British, Prussian, and Austrian infantry on the right started what was to be the bloodiest battle of the war. Allied cooperation was smooth and firm. The Dutch particularly distinguished themselves under the youthful Prince of Orange. Marlborough moved about the battlefield, directing operations at critical points. The coup de gras, a cavalry charge in the center of the line, was executed by combined British, Prussian, Hanoverian, and Imperialist troopers. During bitter fighting, these combined forces ruptured the French line and drove them from the field. Only the devastated condition of the allied forces prevented a pursuit. This last great battlefield victory of Marlborough served as another example of allied cooperation in battle.

The allied plan for 1710 was to continue the drive into the French center to penetrate the second and third lines of their defensive zone. Hence, the campaign consisted primarily of sieges of fortresses and was essentially unencumbered by coalition disagreements. As a result, the season ended with the allies able to

claim only a few towns. Conversely, the French staved off defeat for another year. Despite the political intrigues that continued to undermine Marlborough's power at home, the allies continued to support his command in the field.

By his final campaign in 1711, Marlborough had been stripped of his many authorities. He no longer enjoyed the ambassadorial status that allowed him wide latitude in warmaking policy. He was a constant target of the jealousies of the queen and of the recently ascendant Tory party. Only his military genius allowed him to remain in command of the coalition forces. This only slightly hindered his ability to command allied forces that year. In fact, 1711 was to be a banner year, both in his brilliant maneuvering of the army and in the continued trust and confidence that his subordinate commanders held for him.

Neither of his brilliant stratagems for the year, the penetration of the lines of *Ne Plus Ultra*, a vast defensive barrier erected by the French before the campaign season, and the siege and capture of the town of Bouchain in the face of a superior enemy, was hindered by coalition problems. Cooperation and responsiveness prevailed among his allied forces. The Dutch commander, Hompesch, played a critical role with a makeshift force in securing passage of the Ne Plus Ultra lines for Marlborough's army. Once the lines were forced, the Dutch deputy, Goslinga, tried to force Marlborough to attack the superior forces of the French. He conspired with the Dutch generals to force the issue. Marlborough subsequently called a council of war, sought the opinions of all his subordinate generals, then made the decision instead to besiege Bouchain. All his commanders, including the Dutch,

fully supported his decision.[17] His last triumph on the battlefield, the siege of Bouchain, was conducted with full allied cooperation.

The campaign of 1711 saw the end of Marlborough's command of the army of the Second Grand Alliance. Despite innumerable difficulties, he had waged ten campaigns with distinction as evidenced by the accomplishments of his armies. The French had been soundly beaten on several occasions and were no longer considered the elite fighting force of the continent. The French army was driven from the Spanish Netherlands and was desperately hanging on to prevent the allied army from marching to Paris. Were it not for unreasonable demands, the Second Grand Alliance could have had peace after virtually year since 1705.

The Allies did not always accept Marlborough's plans. As is common in coalition warfare, the commander must accept the lowest common denominator. Marlborough did this well as his campaigns of 1706, 1709, and 1711 indicate. Due to the vast differences in the coalition. he occasionally had to pursue his plans and deceive at least one non supportive ally, a risky tactic at best. The march to the Danube in 1704 is a classic example of this. Marlborough demonstrated a good ability to decide when to acquiesce, when to press, and when to deceive.

This common man did a noteworthy job in commanding his coalition in the field, particularly when many of his allied subordinates were royalty. His diplomacy. coupled with his military skill, served him well. A good example was an occasion when the Prince of Anhalt, commander of the Prussian contingent, angrily confronted Marlborough with charges of a personal affront. The duke

embraced him with open arms, heaping lavish praise on the Prince and upon his troops. He then invited the Prince to sit down so Marlborough could acquaint him with his plans. Upon returning to his army, the Prince informed friends "The ascendant of that man is inconceivable. I was unable to utter an angry word; he totally disarmed me in an instant."[18]

Again, Capt. Maycock provided us a good assessment of the challenges presented by the coalition as Marlborough planned his campaigns:

> "At the commencement of every campaign, he had to face the same ever-recurring difficulties. The Dutch forces were always unprepared to commence operations, the contingents of the German principalities were always late..... Moreover, he was thwarted by the continual obstruction of the pig-headed Dutch deputies and the insubordination of their generals."[19]

COALITION WARFARE AT THE STRATEGIC LEVEL

The problems Marlborough faced at the strategic level of war were just as acute and just as debilitating to the war effort as those found at the operational level. These problems did not prevent the allies from achieving many of their national objectives, but they ultimately caused the Second Grand Alliance to obtain less than was possible.

Though defeat of France was the common objective of the coalition partners, each member state had its own national goals. England wanted to prevent the union of France and Spain, which

would give France continental hegemony and would also threaten England's sea supremacy. The Dutch wanted a barrier against French aggression in the Spanish Netherlands and felt threatened when the French controlled that region. The Austrian Empire wanted to gain Spanish territory in northern Italy to which it felt it had a hereditary right. Denmark and Prussia had little political interest and, with the German states, were content to provide forces and reap the monetary benefits from it.[20]

At the strategic level, Marlborough exercised power and authority not normally given a commander in a democratic society today. King William's admiration of his military prowess, coupled with the recognition of his extreme favor with the royal successor, Princess Anne, earned him this massive power base.[21] His official posts included: Captain-General for the British forces in Flanders, allied commander-in-chief, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary for the King and Queen, and Master-General of the Ordnance.[22] As William III's plenipotentiary, he negotiated the treaties that constituted the Second Grand Alliance. [23] Doing so gave him a perspective of how the various rulers and leaders stood with one another. He also established contacts with the leading Dutch who were to exert strong influence within the alliance. He established close working relationships with Heinsius, the Dutch Grand Pensionary or "Foreign Minister," and with Count Wratislaw, the Empire's Foreign Minister. In essence, Marlborough, in addition to being commander-in-chief, also served as foreign minister for England in planning and prosecuting the war.

Throughout the ten years of his service, Marlborough played the key role in negotiating military contributions by the alliance members. He spent the winter months moving from court to court where he paid respects to the heads of state of the supporting nations, advised them of his progress, and secured their support for the next year. As the war drug on, this became more difficult. In 1705, he visited the Courts of Prussia and Hanover and successfully secured their support in the face of a rising Swedish threat.[24] His diplomatic efforts secured Prussian troops for the 1706 campaign in Italy and staved off the collapse of the alliance.[25] In 1707, as the threat of aggression from Charles XII of Sweden again threatened the alliance, Marlborough personally interceded with the Swedish king and convinced him of the wisdom of taking his efforts into Russia. He also "bribed" Count Piper, Charles' aide, to encourage his master east.[26] In 1709, he again persuaded the King of Prussia to provide 20,000 troops to the allied cause, arguing that the king would be held in esteem proportionate to the size of force that he contributed. He contended that the greatness of a king was ultimately measured by a large army of good troops. Such arguments were appealing to a military monarch.[27] These examples are indicative of the diplomatic efforts that this Captain-General put into building and saving the Grand Alliance. Even as his fortunes faded at home in later years, Marlborough continued to enjoy the respect and confidence of the allies. His personal presence on the battlefield, buoyed by his successful operations, ensured faithfulness to the alliance.

With the exception of his 1704 march into Bavaria, Marlborough's command of forces in the field was limited to

Flanders and the Netherlands. However, he influenced events in the other theaters as well, particularly those which had British forces. He nominated commanders to the queen and provided guidance to the strategy in these theaters. At the urging of the allies, he consented to opening a theater of war in Spain, where the Imperial claimant, Archduke Charles, could become engaged in the field in the Spanish theater. Directed by the British government to provide support, he selected some of the best British regiments to go to Spain, over the sharp protests of the Dutch.[28] In 1705, he desired to move with the British forces to Italy, which he saw as decisive for the coming campaign. Though he was overruled from going, he devoted his efforts to securing financing from England and Holland, as well as troops from Prussia and Germany, to support Eugene in that theater for the coming season.[29] This weakened his forces in Flanders for the coming campaign and led to an indecisive year; however, it does reflect his willingness to put the strategic objectives above any personal ones.

His unique position subjected Marlborough to many political challenges as he prosecuted the war. An example already discussed is the total reluctance of the Dutch States-General to allow him to fight in 1702 and 1703. After the 1703 campaign, the Dutch struck a medal in his honor for his "masterful" campaign.[30] Even as he suffered silently his inability to fight the French in open battle, he sent congratulations to the Dutch States-general for their contributions to the 1703 campaign.[31] In 1704, he pulled a coup by inducing the Margrave of Baden to undertake the siege on Ingolstadt. This got a problem subordinate out of the way while he and Eugene

induced the French to fight at Blenheim. In 1706, he became embroiled in a dispute that involved the disfavor of the British ambassador to the Empire, Stepney. Prince Eugene and the Austrian ambassador, Wratislaw, requested he intercede with the Queen to have Stepney removed. Marlborough did so successfully, though he damaged his personal relations with Wratislaw in the process. [32]

The political intrigues that ultimately led to his demise came from within the British government. Throughout the initial phases of the war, Marlborough enjoyed the complete trust of Queen Anne. As the war progressed, he steadily lost power and influence. His demise started when an irreconcilable feud arose between the queen and Sarah. His steadfast defense of his wife started his split with Anne. In 1708, he publicly challenged the queen by threatening to resign if she removed his friend, Godolphin, as Lord Treasurer. In 1709, he again challenged her appointment of officers to prestigious positions. All this led to his loss of prestige and power on the home front. Only his military genius and diplomatic ability with the allies helped him remain in command so long. By 1710, his loss of authority affected his ability to influence strategy. In that campaign season, Marlborough had to acquiesce in the Dutch desire for an attack through the center of Flanders as opposed to his own preference for a campaign along the French coast. Though the latter strategy favored English interests, Marlborough had no support on the home front to help sell his option. No doubt, this loss of prestige and influence encouraged Louis XIV to decide against peace. Until the end, the British people and the allies continued to idolize Marlborough. Dissatisfaction with the war, political maneuvering

between the Whigs and the Tories, and the rift between Anne and Marlborough's wife, and unsubstantiated charges of peculation all contributed to his relief. His military capability served England and the coalition well, but his political vulnerability was his downfall. He had dared to stand up to the queen. Though history may judge him justified in his positions, he was not wise to embarrass the throne and particularly the vengeful Queen Anne. Spurred by Marlborough's critics within the Tory party, she finally relieved him as commander-in-chief.

CONCLUSIONS

So what conclusions can be reached through this foray through early eighteenth century coalition warfare? Are there any relevant lessons for building and maintaining twentieth century coalitions? If so, what are these lessons? What are the salient considerations and what is their impact for today?

At the tactical level, the lessons seem straightforward. Marlborough demonstrated characteristics that we now take for granted among leaders, though they were not shared by most commanders of his day. He viewed his soldiers as human beings, not merely as tools of war. He cared for his coalition soldiers and made their welfare a top priority. This man, affectionately known as "Corporal John," inspired their trust and confidence. The British redcoats, the hirelings and the allied soldiers alike were cared for.

Tactical doctrine presented no insurmountable problems. The allied soldiers and armies worked reasonably well together in battle

and in siege warfare. However, differences at the higher levels were debilitating to the coalition. In operational and strategic doctrine, Marlborough could be classified as a radical for his desire to bring the French to battle. This type thinking was alien to commanders and heads of state on both sides of the coalition. Throughout his ten years of command, Marlborough was never able to win them over to his thinking. Only Prince Eugene seemed to share a common vision for prosecuting war. Despite the high regard in which these two were held, they were unable to change completely the way in which the coalition sought to defeat France. This undoubtedly prolonged the war and the total amount of human suffering. The lesson contained herein is that any coalition will have to fight at the pace of its most timid member. Doctrine to which all do not agree will not be fully executed and innovative thinking, such as that advocated by Marlborough, will be difficult to implement in a coalition environment.

The conflict between national interests and alliance interests is quite indicative of problems that can plague an alliance today. In Marlborough's time, all the partners agreed in principle that the common goal was to defeat the French. However, what constituted that defeat was a different matter. To the English, prevention of a union between France and Spain, with its inherent threat to English shipping, was paramount. This influenced Marlborough's focus on destroying the French army. To the Dutch, defeat meant establishing a security barrier against the French in the Spanish Netherlands. During the ten years of Marlborough's command, they opposed any plan that diverted the main action from Flanders. As soon as the

barrier was secure, they immediately made peace overtures. To the Empire, defeat meant recognition of their rightful claims to the Spanish possessions. However, as the Hungarian revolt worsened, their attention became focused on this more immediate threat and lessened their zeal for supporting and resourcing the Grand Alliance. The Germans and Prussians were willing to support as long as their other borders remained secure. The Swedish threat frequently jeopardized their contributions to the alliance. Within this political web, we find the military commander, Marlborough, bargaining to save his force. This is not a role we would expect a commander-in-chief to play today. In Marlborough's time, it was a power that surely served him well.

Perhaps the biggest difference in waging coalition warfare in Marlborough's time is the sheer amount of power vested in him. On the national level, as the Captain General, he had the power to arm, muster, and organize the army, resist invasion, and exercise martial law. As master General of the Ordnance, he had the power to allocate resources. Though he did not control money, his close friend, Godolphin, did. Hence, his power over the treasury was strong as well.[33] As the Plenipotentiary of the King and Queen, he enjoyed ambassadorial status, as he made treaties and alliances, and acted as the state representative of his government in the foreign courts. Hence, he shaped not only the military strategy, but national strategy and foreign policy. He wielded power that a modern coalition commander would not hold in our present democratic system.

In exercising the above powers, Marlborough displayed personal attributes that served him well and would serve a modern

coalition commander equally well. He was always diplomatic and tactful, even in the face of coalition adversity. He was able to deal with situations where political necessity outweighed military utility. His military reputation inspired allies, he made frequent personal visits to heads of state, and he had a gift for dissimulation, avoiding head-on clashes of interest.[34] No doubt his twenty plus years in the court of England and his vast dealings with monarchs from a variety of nations served him well as he commanded the Grand Alliance armies. His 28 years of military experience before 1702 had been in various coalition environments. He had fought with several coalitions before the War of the Spanish Succession. The basic ability to employ diplomacy, coupled with his force of will, held in check the repeatedly divergent aims of the member nations.

One factor that ensured Marlborough's success was his military genius. His smashing success on the battlefield kept his prestige and power high within the coalition. Throughout the entire war, England was the smallest contributor of manpower, normally authorizing 40,000 soldiers per year, 18,000 of who were British and the remainder were mercenaries. This is in sharp contrast to the Dutch contribution of 100,000 annually. The Empire's contribution was similar. England was not the superpower of the era and could not "bludgeon" the other members to its way of acting. However, the genius of Marlborough overcame these limits and enhanced the power he enjoyed because of who and what he was.

The Duke was not without his faults. He was ambitious and sought wealth, power, and social position avidly. This ambition for wealth and power led him to solicit a bribe from the French in 1708

in exchange for his influence in the peace overtures of that year.[35] In 1709, he petitioned Queen Anne to appoint him Captain-General for life.[36] Though his intentions were honest, this was an ill advised move, given the queen's rising antagonism toward him. This request exposed him to the rebuff of his opponents, who portrayed him as one seeking a return to the Cromwellian military authority.

His ultimate relief from command came on the heels of accusations of peculation. He was accused of misappropriating bread monies and of taking a share of the money paid to England by the allies. While charges were never proven, his opponents were able to use his ambitious characteristics against him and convince the queen that he committed wrongdoing.

His personal shortcomings did not hinder his ability to plan campaigns and to wage war. However, they did hurt his ability to coalesce support for his strategy as the war progressed. After 1709, his loss of prestige with the queen and her advisors, and with Parliament, undoubtedly cost him some of the support and resources he needed to win. It also weakened his position with the allies and made it almost impossible for him to impose his will on them.

Coalition warfare has been and will continue to be the typical way of waging war. Even across the span of history, many principles for successful coalitions remain constant. Diplomacy and tact, cooperation in the face of adversity, resiliency—these are traits that serve any coalition commander well. Marlborough amply displayed all these traits. It's best summed up by J.F.C. Fuller, who wrote about him:

"Courteous and patient, he possessed what so few men of genius are endowed with- the ability to tolerate fools gladly. Nothing unbalanced him, whether it was the stupidity of his allies, the duplicity of the politicians, or the ability of his enemies."[37]

ENDNOTES

[1] Winston S. Churchill, Marlborough His Life and Times, 6 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933-1938), 2:44.

[2] Ibid., 28.

[3] David G. Chandler, The Art of War in the Age of Marlborough (New York: Hippocrene Books, 1976), 93.

[4] Robert E. Scouller, The Armies of Queen Anne (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1966), 291.

[5] Russell F. Weigley, The Age of Battles, The Quest for Decisive Warfare from Breitenfeld to Waterloo (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991), 85.

[6] Churchill, 4:95.

[7] Chandler, The Art of War in the Age of Marlborough, 136.

[8] George Macauley Trevelyan, England Under Queen Anne (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1930), 224.

[9] David G. Chandler, Marlborough as Military Commander (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1973), 134.

[10] Trevelyan, 183.

[11] Frederick Maycock, An Outline of Marlborough's Campaigns (London: George Allen and Co., Ltd., 1913), 178.

[12] LTC Dave R. Palmer and MAJ Albert Sidney Britt, The Art of War in the 17th and 18th Centuries (West Point: Department of History, United States Military Academy, 1969), 62.

[13] Chandler, Marlborough as Military Commander, 157.

[14] Churchill, 4:236.

[15] Churchill, 5:129.

[16] Churchill, 6:10[illegible].

[17] Ibid., 435.

[18] Ibid., 411.

[19] Maycock, 178.

[20] Ibid., 9.

[21] Chandler, Marlborough as Military Commander, 54.

[22] Scouller, 90.

[23] Churchill, 3:45.

[24] Churchill, 4:156.

[25] Churchill, 5:51.

[26] Ibid., 249.

[27] Churchill, 6:48.

[28] Churchill

[29] Churchill, 5:90.

[30] Churchill, 3:258.

[31] Ibid., 243.

[32] Churchill, 4:176.

[33] Scouller, 56.

[34] Chandler, Marlborough as Military Commander, 320.

[35] Churchill, 6:24.

[36] Ibid., 185.

[37] J.F.C. Fuller, A Military History of the Western World from the Defeat of the Spanish Armada to the Battle of Waterloo, vol II (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Company, 1955), 128.

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